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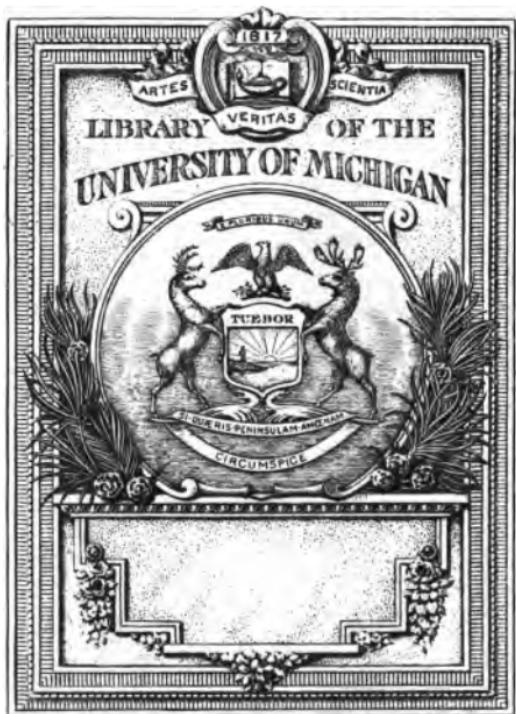
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From the Author

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*The general religious Instruction of the Poor, the surest
Means of promoting universal national Happiness:*

REPRESENTED IN A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED ON

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1792,

AT

HEMEL-HEMPSTEAD, HERTS;

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE

SUNDAY-SCHOOLS

Established in that Town, and supported by the voluntary
Contributions of the

INHABITANTS,

Who thus secure to 180 poor Children the Advantages of
RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

BY JOHN LIDDON.

L O N D O N:

SOLD BY C. DILLY, POULTRY; J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD;
T. KNOTT, LOMBARD-STREET; AND M. GURNEY, HOLBORN;
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*The general religious Instruction of the Poor,
the surest Means of promoting universal
national Happiness.*

" The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the
" leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and
" the young lion and the fatling together; and a little
" child shall lead them.

" And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young
" ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat
" straw like the ox.

" And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the
" asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the
" cockatrice's den.

" They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy
" mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge
" of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

ISAIAH xi. 6, 7, 8, 9.

HISTORY hitherto, is little better than a
long repetition of the weaknesses, vices, and
miseries of mankind. Most of its pages are
stained with blood.

Were the future always to be like the past, the
purest benevolence might wish a speedy termina-
tion to a world, in which so much misery a-
bounds, and where the hand of man is so often
lifted up to destroy his brother!

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But revelation, that best gift of heaven, comes in here to our relief, and sets before us a pleasing prospect of future happiness in this world, by informing us that ignorance shall be dispelled, and the malevolent passions cease to reign ; that men *shall beat their swords into plough shares, and their spears into pruning hooks ; and that the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.* A book which conveys this important information, and which bears so many indubitable marks of its divine original as does this, ought to be prized above *thousands of gold and silver !* It is indeed *a light shining in a dark place !*

If we enter fully into the meaning of such prophecies as these, and compare them with the present state of the world, we shall be fully convinced that an almost total change in the state of things must take place, before the predictions they contain will have their accomplishment. The change is so great, that, on any other view than that which the Scriptures afford, it appears not only improbable, but impossible. *But with God all things are possible.*

In opposition to the accomplishment of these prophecies, we behold every thing which the world has of the most stable ; such as strong prejudices, ancient institutions, priesthood, despotism ; in a word, all the power and all the policy which
the

the world can combine. But, on the other side, we behold the omnipotence of truth rising like the sun in its strength, to scatter the clouds of ignorance, superstition, and prejudice; we see the sure word of prophecy informing us of its certain, universal, and eternal triumph; and we know that nothing can effectually resist the hand of that glorious Being *who is excellent in counsel and mighty in working.* Before these the obstacles which in any other view appear invincible, at once vanish, and every rugged impassable mountain becomes a perfect plain. *For, is there any thing too hard for the Lord?*

But though this change must be almost total, yet no lover of peace and order need be alarmed. It is a change entirely for the better: a change in the moral state of men, which, as far as pure religion influences, will be effected without confusion or blood. It will overturn those false maxims, and destroy those bad passions, which have in every age produced so much misery. Then just principles and benevolent affections will have their reign; and their reign will produce universal and lasting happiness. This is finely described in the figurative, but very expressive language of the text; *The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb;* and so on. Those bad dispositions, pride, ambition, anger, malice, and revenge, which have made men ferocious and cruel

cruel as the beasts of the forest, shall be subdued; and *the knowledge of the Lord* shall transform men into his image, who was all gentleness and benevolence, and *who hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps.* *For the son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.*

If the universal knowledge of the Lord will produce universal peace and happiness, most certainly it well becomes the friends of mankind and of the religion of Jesus, to do all in their power to promote its spread, and to enter most heartily into every plan which appears likely to extend its influence. This does the institution which now merits our attention and support.

It may be objected by some who confound the conduct of nominal Christians with Christianity itself, that religion, instead of putting an end to strife among mankind, has been the occasion of the most bloody wars which were ever kindled; and that in proportion to men's zeal for religion, so has been their enmity and cruelty to each other. This is readily granted: but a real Christian ventures nothing when he affirms, that such religion was false. For genuine Christianity never did, nor ever will, arm the hand of man against man. If we would form a just idea of pure Christianity, we must not view it as it appears in the spirit and conduct of contending sects;

sects ; but as it appears, perfect, entire, and wanting nothing, in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Here it is *the wisdom which is from above, pure and peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, without partiality or hypocrisy, full of mercy and good fruits.* False Christians may hate each other on the account of their differences, and endeavour to interest the Deity in their fierce and bloody quarrels ; and, after having desolated a fine country, and committed ten thousand murders, they may sing their *Tz DEUM* : but such a practice was never countenanced by the gospel, nor could such a service be any thing but an abomination in the sight of him who hath said, *Thou shalt do no murder.* Such a conduct was never authorised by the benevolent Jesus, whose religion brings *glory to God* by producing *peace on earth, goodwill among men.*

To spread the religion of Jesus, is the professed object of Sunday-Schools ; and they appear to me to fall in with its general design of removing ignorance, destroying vice, and conforming men to the moral image of God.

But even these institutions have their enemies ; and what is astonishing, among those who profess to be Christians and teachers too of that religion, which has for its object the instruction of the poor, and *the turning of men from darkness to light.*

The

The reasons they give are more astonishing still. They fear, that if the poor be generally enlightened, their ideas will be exalted above their situation in life; and that the effect will eventually be injurious to society. Curious reasoning for Christian teachers! But how have such men learned Christ?

For six years past I have had the honour of delivering annually a discourse to you, pleading for your assistance who are not subscribers; and in these discourses I have considered this excellent charity in different points of view. I intend the present one as a justification of its continuance and improvement; and to this end I shall establish the following proposition:

That the general religious instruction of the Poor, is the surest means of promoting universal national Happiness.

It will not be disputed that the poor are a numerous body, and that upon their happiness the defence, wealth, and prosperity of our country greatly depends: for they fight our battles, man our ships, and contribute to our increasing riches in numberless different ways; and, what is of greater importance still, to their care our children are necessarily committed during those years in which they receive impressions not easily erased. If these should be bad, the seeds of their future misery

mifery are too often sown. On our own account then, as well as on that of the poor, ought every thing to be done for them which the order of things will permit, and which true Christianity dictates, in order that they may bear the burthen of life with chearfulness, and, through the blessing of God, be prepared for a state where no mortifying distinctions subsist. Such is the state which the gospel of Christ teaches all his real disciples to expect.

Nothing appears so well adapted to produce these desirable ends as general instruction; and especially that kind of instruction, which the sacred scriptures afford. They propose to lead men to happiness through the knowledge of God. Christ was *anointed to preach the gospel to the poor*; and when he sent Paul to the Gentiles, it was for this end, *To open their eyes* by instruction. He entered fully into the nature of his office, and considered *himself a debtor to the unwise as well as to the wise*. If the gospel be the mean which God has appointed to make men *wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus*, it follows clearly, that every means should be used to put men into a capacity not only of hearing it from others, but of reading and examining it for themselves. What is the mind of man without instruction? "The mind untaught is a dark waste, " where fiends and tempests howl *; or, in the

* Beattie.

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language

language of Paul, men are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them. For ignorance is the prolific mother of every abomination. But the knowledge of Christ is the parent of every good to society. It leads to general happiness,

I.

By preventing vice and abject poverty.

Preventatives are better than remedies; and vice is much more easily prevented, than bad habits are destroyed. Hence the prospect of doing good among poor children, "not hackneyed in the ways of bad men," is far more promising than that of recalling men from the vices which have become confirmed habits. Hence saith the prophet, "*Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then ye who are accustomed to do evil, may learn to do well.*" For though it must be allowed, that the gospel of Christ has been *the wisdom of God* to enlighten millions of dark minds in persons of riper years, and *the power of God* to save them from their vicious habits; yet is success in instructing the young, infinitely more promising upon every principle of sound reason, scripture and experience: for "*Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*"

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The same religious instruction which has a tendency to check the natural propensity to vice, as naturally and as forcibly operates to secure from abject poverty. For abject poverty is often the consequence of vicious habits, which even in high life render the most *princely fortunes* insufficient, and embarrass where they do not reduce to beggary. The expences of vice know no bounds. Vice and abject poverty among the labouring part of mankind are inseparable companions. But true religion not only saves from expensive vices, it also begets habits of virtue; such as frugality and industry. Industry keeps the man in that state of proper exertion, so conducive to health; and that temperance which religion inculcates, enables the frugal to save what in time accumulates, and raises them to superior stations. Hence it is that there are so many opulent persons professing godliness, who have risen from very small and unpromising beginnings; and there is hardly a connection so contracted as not to afford many striking proofs of the doctrine now taught. It is true, there are many drones who profess religion; but their idleness is not the effect of their religion. They would be idle in every other character. There is one direction of true religion which I would wish every idle man to study; and that is, "*He that will not work, let him not eat.*"

Let us then suppose that the influence of real religion were more general, and that the divine blessing should attend an institution well calculated to promote its spread. What happy effects might not be expected? The community at large would be relieved from one of its greatest burthens, I mean the excessive poor-rates; for the greater part who are now a burden to the community, would then be above the want of assistance. And the best politicians will allow it to be much more desireable to put men into a capacity to rise out of their poverty, than by making a certain indiscriminate provision for them to keep them easy in it. And what so likely to effect this desireable end, as a course of instruction which tends to lift otherwise neglected children into notice, and trains them to habits of industry?

It may be observed too, that those who, through age, blindness, or some of the numberless unforeseen evils to which men are liable, are plunged into the deepest distress, might then expect a more effectual relief, without being crowded in a work-house together with those whose vices are the sole cause of their poverty, and whose depravity renders it rather a punishment than a relief to the pious and afflicted poor, to be obliged to associate with them. For these the just feelings of humanity, refined and invigorated

by

by the motives of the gospel, warmly and effectually plead. How different and much more happy would our nation be, were the influence of religion to reach no farther than as a preventative of vice and abject poverty, and as a certain effectual relief to those whom providence (for wise reasons no doubt) causes to drink so deep of the cup of human woe. To this end this charity is directed, and as such, deserves our warmest support. When *the knowledge of the Lord* prevails, this will make one source of national happiness.

II.

Christian knowledge has a tendency to establish the peace of society, by teaching each individual to fill up that place which Providence has assigned him. It has been suggested that nothing surprises an intelligent Christian more than the objections of those who profess a regard for Christianity, and yet are afraid that the general instruction of the poor will raise them above their situation, and destroy that proper subordination which is necessary to the order and happiness of our present state. If this objection were well founded, it would be happier for all ranks that the poor should remain in that state of ignorance and neglect to which they have so long been condemned. It is difficult to assign a cause why such an objection is made, which does not convey

vey an unfavourable idea of the objectors. The most charitable reason that presents itself to my mind is, that, however well informed such persons may be in other sciences, they stand in great need of more of that kind of instruction which is conveyed at Sunday-Schools. For, were they acquainted with the true nature and the genuine influence of true Christianity on the hearts and lives of those who receive it, they would know that nothing produces contentment in the lowest situations so effectually as true religion.

Such an objection cannot arise from an experience of the blessed effects of ignorance among the labouring part of mankind, except where they are designed to be the dupes of imposture. Ignorance indeed is the certain means to prevent a discovery of the fraud. But in the religion of Jesus, there is no kind of fraud. Every part challenges the closest investigation; and its professed end is, not to oblige men to take things upon trust, but to make *all men see for themselves*. The more it is known, the more it will be loved; and that obedience which flows from the heart, is the most acceptable to God and man.

Ignorance is so far from being accounted a benefit to society, that there is nothing of which masters and mistresses more frequently complain than the ignorance, obstinacy and profligacy of their

their servants. If this then be a disorder, it requires a remedy ; and what remedy is so suitable and so efficacious as that kind of instruction which has a direct tendency to make men good ? Besides, this is a remedy of God's own providing, and it has actually reclaimed and purified inconceivable numbers in every age. It is certainly prudent to make the experiment. And if religious instruction should fail, men can but remain just what they are ; and those who have engaged in so good a cause, though their success may not be equal to their wishes, will still have the satisfaction of having exerted themselves for the benefit of mankind. *Their work will be with the Lord, and their reward with their God.*

We might naturally suppose from the nature of the objection, that though the general tendency of the gospel was to make men good, yet it had no precepts directed to servants, nor motives calculated to give effect to any such precepts. But neither is this the case. The gospel abounds with precepts, which enjoin diligence, obedience, and contentment ; and it enforces them by the most powerful motives. Servants are not to act merely with a view to the approbation of their masters ; but as in the sight of that God, who is no respecter of persons, and who will reward every man according to his work. And what can be more desirable to those in superior stations, than to have those about them in whom they

they can confide? They will then be under no anxiety, least their property should be embezzled, or their children corrupted by those to whom they are entrusted. *The knowledge of the Lord* produces this happy effect; and, were this general, what a fund of domestic felicity would it produce!

Nor will this contentment and subordination be confined to private families; they will extend themselves to society at large. *The knowledge of the Lord* will teach and enforce respect for those laws and magistrates which are *a terror to evil works, and a praise to them who do well.* Real Christians obey *not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake;* and they may justly expect the protection and praise of every well-regulated government, whose end is not the aggrandizement, emolument, and power of the few, but the defence and welfare of the whole. For, for this cause they pay tribute, that the persons, consciences, property, and reputation of all may be secure. A well-instructed Christian peasantry will constitute the support and happiness of the nation; and will more than repay all the pains and expence which the more opulent may incur, in order to improve the minds, and regulate the conduct of the poor. For, if *the knowledge of the Lord* have in every age reclaimed many from vice, and made them examples of virtue in their different stations, for the

the very same reason, were this knowledge general, the happy effects would likewise be general.

Besides, if there be any force in the objection, that to instruct the poor will raise their ideas above their situation, the same objection may be urged with equal propriety against their mixing indiscriminately in our places of public worship; because the professed end of public worship is religious instruction. But, let it be observed, that the Gospel is designed for the poor as well as for the rich; and, if it be desirable that they should reap the advantage of so gracious an institution, there is every reason to encourage an establishment, which will enable them to judge of the truth of what they hear, that they may follow their own convictions, and so *glorify their Father in heaven*, by filling up their various stations in that way which he has required. For, *herein is God glorified, that Christians in every station bring forth much good fruit.* Thus general instruction, or *the knowledge of the Lord*, will produce peace in society. It may be affirmed next,

III.

That the general instruction of the poor is *the most probable means of rendering public preaching more extensively useful.*

It is a general and a too just complaint, among all denominations of Christians, that but little ad-

vantage, compared with what might be expected and wished, attends public preaching. Many reasons have been and might now be assigned for this with much justice; but, perhaps, the greatest of all is in general overlooked. May we not ask, without exceeding the bounds of modesty, or conveying the least reflection on any thinking preacher in the world, Do not most of our public discourses suppose a degree of previous general instruction, and habits of reasoning, which the totally uninstructed do not possess? Hence to them preaching is *in an unknown tongue*. If the Apostle argued on another occasion, *How shall they hear without a preacher?* Is not the case parallel, if the language of preaching be not understood?

If this be a disadvantage under which the poor and uninstructed now labour, it is, in the present refined and improving state of mankind, a disadvantage which is daily increasing. For, as men think and refine their own ideas and language, they recede more from the ideas and language of the totally illiterate; and thus what is an improvement in the preacher, becomes an injury to the more uninstructed part of those who hear him.

If this be the fact, and if we be really desirous that public instruction should be more useful, something must be done; an alteration must take place

place either in the teacher, or in the hearers of that description for which I am now pleading. Either the teacher, who has been endeavouring for years to refine his ideas and language, must associate and make himself familiar with the habits of thinking and speaking among the most illiterate and neglected; or some means must be used to bring the poor out of that state of ignorance into which, by poverty and neglect, they have been plunged. The latter appears the more easy and the more eligible plan. What means then of accomplishing so desirable an end can be more likely, than to bring poor children in general to an acquaintance with those scriptures, to which all our public instructions ought to correspond, and by which every thing advanced in a Christian pulpit ought to stand or fall? By encouraging the general instruction of the poor, numbers will attend at different places of worship, who would otherwise attend no where; and will be able to judge for themselves. Can we devise a charity more likely to meet with the blessing of God, or which promises greater advantages to the rising generation and to posterity? The general instruction of poor children, we may safely conclude, is a likely means of making preaching more useful, and thus of increasing the happiness of the nation, by increasing *the knowledge of the Lord.* The next benefit I shall mention, is,

IV.

When the knowledge of the Lord shall be general, wars shall be no more.

War is one of heaven's severest scourges, by which pride and ambition are severely punished. Its horrid consequences are too dreadful to realize. The Prophets frequently foretell a termination to this scourge of the world. To this the text most clearly points. When *the knowledge of the Lord*, or, in other words, when pure Christianity shall cover the earth, then the peaceable effects described shall take place. Pride, ambition, and revenge, those ferocious and truly infernal dispositions, shall reign no more. There shall not only be a cessation of hostilities, but there shall be the utmost harmony throughout the earth. *For the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together.* This is a revolution in the state of the world most devoutly to be wished! Even the distant prospect must fill every benevolent mind, every Christian, with the purest delight! To effect this change, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is most admirably adapted; and its general reception will most completely accomplish the proposed and glorious design!

To be fully convinced of this, we have only to take the most cursory view of the religion of Jesus,

Jesus, as it is revealed in the Gospel. We shall there see that it prohibits the indulgence of those *passions* which are the sources of war—that its *principles* preclude every cause of animosity—and that it cultivates those benevolent *affections* which secure and increase, in proportion as they operate, the happiness of the human race.

The Gospel prohibits the indulgence of *pride*, *ambition*, and *avarice*, those demons which first disturb and convulse the breast of an individual, and then communicate their baneful influence around as far as his power extends. But can these have liberty to reign, where the benevolent Spirit of Christ has taken up his abode? Most certainly not. The Gospel calls the man indeed to honour; but it is by means of humility. *He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* The Gospel obliges those who receive it to *fight*; but it is with unruly passions. The whole of its instructions perfectly accord with that sentiment of Solomon, *He that ruleth his spirit, is better than he who taketh a city.* Had most of the conquerors and heroes, or, to speak with more justice, the robbers and murderers of the human race, been able to rule their own spirits, they would not so often have desolated the earth. The religion of Jesus *every where* attacks the malevolent passions, and inculcates meekness and forgiveness, even where injuries are received.

Observe,

Observe, next, the *principles* on which the Christian religion is founded, and you will be convinced that, if they have their genuine influence, the causes of animosity are done away ; for they are principles of justice. In all our intercourse with each other, as individuals, or as nations, the golden rule is, to direct and regulate our conduct by the maxims of justice ; that is, as our Lord teaches us, *to do unto others as we would that they should unto us, to do even so unto them.* If this principle did but preside in the cabinets of princes, or in the breasts of the people at large, every ground of dispute would be precluded. For who, that places himself in the situation of his neighbour, can be at a loss to know what line of conduct he ought to pursue ? In religion, especially, which has been so often the pretext for the most bloody wars, every pretence for dispute is removed by the perfect equality which Christ has appointed in his church ; in which conscience is freed from all human controul, and he alone is judge. For *to his own master each individual stands or falls.* When men assume a right to punish or controul their fellow creatures in matters purely religious, they are so far from following the dictates of undefiled religion, that they go in direct opposition to its most sacred injunctions. Should an individual, or a society of Christians, undertake to punish another individual or society, under a pretence of their differing ever so widely,

widely, the others might justly reply ; the difference on each side is exactly the same, and what power on earth has a right to interfere, directly or indirectly, in an affair in which God alone is the judge ? Conscience is under no dominion but that of Christ ; and when the powers of this world interfere, they transgress the boundaries of human jurisdiction, and attack both God and man in their most sacred rights. All denominations of Christians alike should pay tribute, and alike they should be entitled to protection. The general principle of the Gospel, both in civil and sacred things, is perfect universal justice. This prevents all ground of difference ; and, when this principle is generally known and received, this part of *the knowledge of the Lord* will likewise bring *glory to God*, by producing *peace on earth*.

But the *dispositions* which Christ requires his disciples to cultivate, put the subject beyond all doubt. By the cultivation of fraternal love, general sympathy, and universal good-will to the whole race of mankind, without distinction of religion, nation, or colour, they adorn their profession in the sight of the world, and become daily more *meet for an inheritance with the saints in light*. When these dispositions become more general, and they will keep pace with the spread of true Christianity, the *knowledge of the Lord* will produce that peace and happiness which the text predicts.

predicts. Then, enslaved and insulted *Ethiopia shall stretch out her arm unto God, and Christ will then appear to be, in the fullest sense of the words, his salvation to the ends of the earth.* Then, men will have no more use for instruments of mutual destruction. Then, shall we see *the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.* Then, *the tabernacle of God will be with men, and there will be, in a moral view, a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.* Again,

V.

The general instruction of the poor will collect together all the ability which God hath distributed amongst mankind at large, and *give it a direction for the public good.*

It has been often observed, that genius but seldom appears. How can this be a subject of surprise, when there are so few opportunities to bring it forth to public view, and so many discouragements to nip it in the bud? Where there are early appearances of ability, which may be directed to any of the useful departments of life, found policy teaches us to cherish it for the general welfare. Real genius requires but little assistance to display itself, and that little is too often denied. Of how many thousands who had abilities,

abilities, and inclinations too, to exert those abilities, may it be said, in the language of Gray,

Chill penury repres'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the foul.

The world has now existed many thousand years; but how little improvement has it made in the science of man! Many receive no kind of education; and many others who do, have their minds filled with prejudices in their youth, from which with difficulty they free themselves in their riper years: And these too often find themselves on the decline of life, before their minds are in a proper state to examine truth with impartiality, and to follow it wherever it may lead them.

Even in religion, how few are taught that the Gospel is the source of pure Christianity! and that it is their business to arrange its parts, and clearly to distinguish what is Christianity and what is not. Hence that mixture of divine truth and human absurdity, so often found; and hence those follies mixed with a divine religion, which make the foundation on which modern deism is built. But were the happy secret of instructing youth found out, and especially were that of proposing to them nothing in religion but pure truth, and teaching them to exert their faculties and to reason justly upon such important subjects, who can tell the extent of human improvement? Let us hope that

as instruction becomes more general, the ability which God hath given may be more generally collected; and that men will be placed in different departments, only because Providence appears to have designed them for such situations. But once more,

VI.

The general religious instruction of the poor has a direct tendency to produce every moral excellence.

To produce the highest degree of moral excellence is the direct end of the Christian religion; for it proposes to conform men to the image of Jesus Christ. To answer this glorious end, all the various parts of the Christian religion are admirably adapted. For there is not a doctrine or a duty, a maxim or a precept, a prohibition, a promise or a prospect, but what alike tends, to use the Apostle's expression, *to make us partakers of the divine nature.*

To teach this religion is the design of Sunday-Schools. It is a design worthy of Christians to engage in, and which will do everlasting honour to the man who first happily conceived it, and brought it into existence.

The spread of the knowledge of this religion must be the diffusion of happiness; consequently, every thing which has the least tendency to accelerate its general propagation, must meet with the hearty support of all the well-wishers to human felicity. On this ground we may reasonably expect, this day, your usual support. For, this knowledge tends to prevent vice and abject poverty—to produce order in society—to make public preaching more generally useful—to put an end to the reign of those passions which are the causes of war—to improve society by calling forth all its ability—and to make of so many Christians, so many imitators of God, who is excellence itself. We may then fairly conclude that, when this *knowledge of the Lord* shall be universal, all the happy consequences contained in the text, will naturally follow, and that *there will be none to hurt or destroy through the whole earth.* Glorious prospect! That it may be soon realized, every Christian will add his hearty Amen!

In this institution, Christians, there is every thing to encourage you to go on; for it is the most unexceptionable, the most hopeful and, extensive of all charities. It is the most unexceptionable, because the objects of it are not poor and ignorant through any fault of their own; nor can it be bestowed on those who at the present time are unworthy of your benevolence. This cannot be

affirmed of many other charities, however excellent they may be; for in too many instances they are abused. But every poor, ignorant child who is proposed for instruction, must doubtless be a proper subject of your kindness.

It is too the most hopeful of all institutions. It is not for us to affirm how far divine goodness may extend in reclaiming and pardoning the most vicious. The extent of divine mercy *as far exceeds our conceptions as the heavens are higher than the earth.* But habits of vice are strong, and custom in sin renders it perfectly natural. Hence, as hath been observed, the language of the prophet; *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then ye who are accustomed to do evil, may learn to do well.* In the subjects of this charity, habits of vice are not confirmed; and there is every reason to expect the divine blessing on an institution, which so perfectly accords with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is also a most extensive charity. There is no saying how wide it may extend, or how lasting may be its duration. It cannot exceed our wishes. You will unite with me in praying, that it may have no limits but the universe, and that it may be as lasting as its duration! *Be ye, therefore, my brethren, stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in this and every work of the Lord, for as much as ye know*